HORROR

NO. 31
JUNE-JULY

# THE VAULT OF HORROR®

10¢

FEATURING...

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE OLD WITCH

IN THIS ISSUE:

E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY

**RAY BRADBURY**

AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!

JOHNNY CRAIG

# RAY BRADBURY

Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Ill., on Aug. 22, 1920. His mother was of Swedish descent, and his father's ancestors came to America in 1630. Ray spent much of his childhood in Arizona. At the age of 12, he received his first typewriter, a toy model, and started to write sequels to Edgar Rice Burroughs novels. As a boy, his greatest interests were magic, acting, and reading the Oz books, Tom Swift, Edgar Allen Poe, and Jules Verne. So it was quite natural, when he began writing, that his first stories were fantasies. He took a short-story course in Los Angeles High School in 1937, graduated in 1938, and had no further formal education. He started submitting stories to magazines at the age of 15, and sold his first story at the age of 21. His early acceptances appeared in the leading pulp magazines. Then in 1945, he sold his first "quality" story to the American Mercury, and followed this with sales to most of America's best-known slick magazines. His stories have been reprinted in some 60 anthologies, including the 1946, 1948, and 1952 volumes of The Best American Short Stories. In 1948, Ray won third prize in the O. Henry Memorial Prize Stories Awards. The only other job Bradbury has ever held outside of writing was during the three years from 1939 to 1942, when he sold newspapers on a street corner at night, while writing during the day. He has had three books of stories published: DARK CARNIVAL, from Arkham House in 1947; THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, from Doubleday in 1950, and THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, Doubleday, 1951. His new book of stories, THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN, is due, again from Doubleday, about the time this biog hits the stands. Ray has just finished writing a science-fiction movie script for a big Hollywood film studio, and has started another. He now lives in Los Angeles with his wife Marguerite, whom he married in 1947, and his two daughters . . . Susan, age three, and Ramona, eighteen months. Having been a fervent collector of comic strips and panels since the age of eight (owning a complete file of Buck Rogers strips from 1928 through 1937, Flash Gordon from 1934 through 1938, Prince Valiant from 1937 through the present, and Tarzan (drawn by Hal Foster) from 1932 through 1936, plus hundreds of old Popeyes, Out Our Ways, Alley Oops, etc.), Ray was most enthusiastic when we suggested adapting some of best stories into the comic format. His reaction to the job E.C. is doing can best be summed up in his own words: *". . . My thanks and gratitude for the really fine adaptations and beautiful art work you are doing on my stories. This is an entirely new experience to me, and I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate the painstaking detail and thought you are putting into your efforts. It seems to me that again and again you achieve the exactly right atmosphere and angle in carrying out the story. . . . You people have a way of continually making me happy. I can't thank you enough!"*

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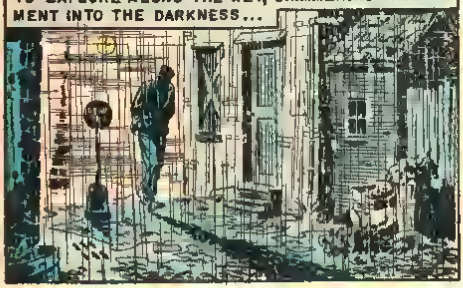
# THE VAULT OF HORROR!®

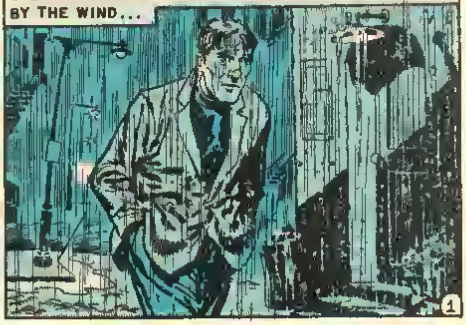
HEH,HEH! THANK HADES,YOU'RE ON TIME. I HAVE BEEN EAGERLY AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL .FOR AFTER MUCH SCROUNGING AROUND IN THE DEEPEST RECESSES OF THE VAULT, I DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT AND CRUMBLING VOLUME WHICH CONTAINED A CLASSIC TALE. I'M CERTAIN YOU WILL ENJOY THIS ONE, SO SETTLE YOUR SKELETON AND PREPARE FOR A TRULY MORBID AND IRONIC STORY ENTITLED...

## EASEL KILL YA!

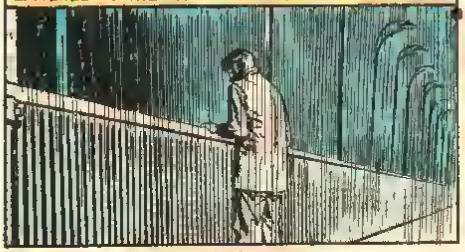
THE MISERABLE WRETCH WANDERED AIMLESSLY THROUGH SILENT, FOGGY STREETS. HISSING RAINDROPS PELTED HIS UNCOVERED HEAD, RAN DOWN HIS FACE, MINGLING WITH TEARS. TOWERING STREET LAMPS FORMED HIS SHADOW INTO GROTESQUE SHAPES ON SOLEMN BUILDINGS, PAINLESSLY ELONGATED IT TO EXPLORE ALONG THE WET, SHIMMERING PAVEMENT INTO THE DARKNESS...



RAINWATER GURGLED ANGRILY IN THE GUTTER, REACHED OUT, CAUGHT, AND CARRIED EVERYTHING IT COULD WITH IT INTO THE SEWER DEPTHS. THE MISERABLE WRETCH SHUFFLED ON, AND ONCE, AN AGONIZED SOB ERUPTED FROM HIS LIPS TO BE SNATCHED AWAY BY THE WIND...



HIS FOOTSTEPS CARRIED HIM OUT ON THE BRIDGE. HE GRIPPED THE RAIL WITH TREMBLING, WHITENED KNUCKLES, STARED UNSEEING INTO THE BLACKNESS AT THE WATER HE KNEW WAS SOMEWHERE BELOW, AND LISTENED TO THE VICIOUS WHISPERINGS OF THE RAIN...

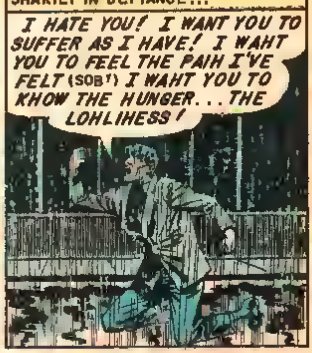


HE STOOD THERE FOR LONG MINUTES, THINKING A MILLION THOUGHTS, SEEING A MILLION VISIONS, RECALLING A MILLION MEMORIES...

A SPARKLING BUBBLE OF FEMALE LAUGHTER IN A PASSING TAXI, GONE IN AN INSTANT. HE WHIRLED AT THE SOUND...

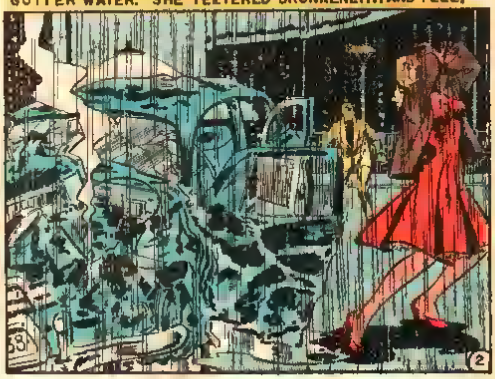
HE STUMBLED INTO THE ROADWAY ON WATERY LEGS...

HE CRUMPLED TO HIS KNEES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, FIST RAISED SHAKILY IN DEFIANCE...




HE WAS ONLY DIMLY AWARE OF THE MOTOR'S ROAR BEHIND HIM, ONLY HALF-HEARD THE COMPLAINING SQUEAL OF TIRES SKIDDING ON SLIPPERY PAVEMENT, BUT HE CLEARLY SAW THE CAR BULLET PAST HIM, SPIN OUT OF CONTROL, FLIP OVER! HE SAW THE BODY THROWN IN THE AIR, HEARD IT STRIKE THE GROUND, MEMORIZED THE SOUND. HE LISTENED TO THE CACOPHONY OF GRINDING METAL AND SHATTERING GLASS, FELT THE JARRING IMPACT AS THE AUTO SLAMMED AGAINST THE CONCRETE BARRIER!

THE WOMAN TUMBLED FROM THE ACCORDIONED MACHINE, PLATINUM HAIR NOW TINTED RED, FLESH ONCE POWDER-WHITE NOW WINE-COLORED! DELICATE, JEWELED FINGERS CLUTCHED HER FACE, CHANGED COLOR WITH THE STREAMING BLOOD THAT STAINED HER CLOTHES, DRIPPED TO THE GROUND AND FUSED, DISSOLVED WITH THE FROLICKING GUTTER WATER. SHE TEETERED DRUNKENLY... AND FELL!



HE HAH, LAUGHING, FHOM THE SCENE. IT WAS GOOD TO KHOW THAT OTHERS COULD FEEL PAIN, COULD SUFFEH AND DIE! IT FILLED HIM WITH A DEEP SATISFACTIOH. HE WAS OVERJOYED, ELATED, *INSPIRED!* BABBLING TO HIMSELF, HE CLIMBED THE NICKETY STAIRS TO HIS HOOM WHERE HE PAIHTED FUHIOUSLY, ENTHANCED, THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE NIGHT...

THE COLO, BLEAK LIGHT OF MORHING FOUND THE ARTIST SITTING DUMBLY ON HIS COT, STARING WITH REDDENED EYES AT THE FINISHED PAIHTING...

IT'S *GOOD.* THE BEST I'VE EVER DOHE. .BUT THE SUBJECT IS SO *DESPICABLE!* I KNOW OF ONLY OHE PERSON WHO WOULD EVEN *LOOK* AT SUCH A PICTURE.. AND LIKE IT!

SOME TIME LATER THE ARTIST SPOKE EXCITEDLY WITH A SMALL, LECHEROUS OLD MAN WHOSE BIMLET EYES RAVAGED THE PAINTING...

THEH... YOU *LIKE* IT? YOU'LL *BUY* IT?!

IT'S MAGHIFICENT! HEH! PROFOUHDLY FILTHY, YET MAGNIFICEHT! I'LL BIVE YOU A HUHDRED DOLLARS FOR IT!

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS IS A LOT OF MONEY TO A PAUPER, BUT WITH HEHT TO PAY, CLOTHES AND PAINTS TO BUY, AND AH EMPTY BELLY TO BE FILLED, IT DOESH'T LAST LONG...

...MONEY'S ALMOST GONE! HO-HUM, GUESS I'O BETTEH KHOCK OFF AHOTHER SADISTIC PAIHTING FOH THE OLD MAH!

BRUSHES IN HAND, HE STOOD BEFORE THE EASEL, STRAHHING FOH AH IDEA. THE BHEATER PART OF A DAY WENT BY, AND STILL HIS CANVAS WAS BLAHK...

IT'S *NO USE!* I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO TURH OUT AHOTHEH PICTURE WITH EASE, BUT I CAH'T! I'VE BEEH FOOLING MYSELF!

HE SLUMPED TO HIS COT, LET THE BRUSHES SLIP FROM HIS FINGERS AND CLATTER TO THE FLOOR. HE FOUGHT TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS OF RAGE AND RESEHTMENT THAT WELLED WITHIN HIM...

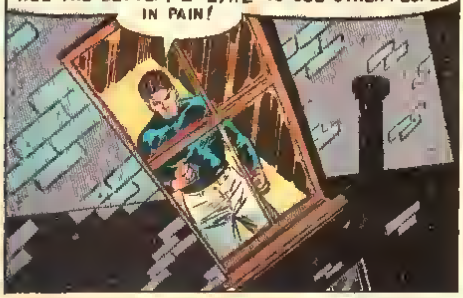
FOH A WHILE I THOUGHT I WAS BEIHG RECOGNIZED AS AH ARTIST...AS A PERSOH, A HUMAH BEIHG! BUT I WAS WROHG.

ONE OLD MAH LIKES MY WORK. OHE OLD MAN WITH A DISEASED MIHD LIKED THE SINFUL, WICKED PICTURE INSPIRED BY THE BLOOD AND PAIH I SAW IN THAT AUTO ACCIDENT. AND THE REST OF THE WORLD SHUHS ME!

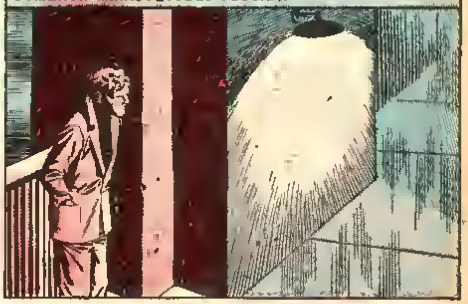
BUT WAIT! THEY'D FEEL DIFFERENTLY IF I WERE A SUCCESS. IF I HAD MOHEY THEY WOULDN'T TURH FROM ME. THEY'D LOOK UP TO ME, SMILE AT ME. THEY'D WAHT TO TALK TO ME, HOT RUH FROM MY SIGHT. AHD THEY'D GATHER 'ROUHD ME AHD THRILL JUST TO TOUCH MY HAND. THEY'D GROVEL AT MY FEET AHD PLEAD WITH ME TO CAST THEM A *GLANCE*, A *WORD!* ALL THIS IF I HAD *MONEY.*

A BLACK REALIZATION ILLUMINATED HIS FACE...

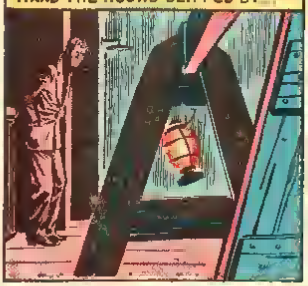
MONEY I CAN GET MONEY FROM THE OLD MAN! HE'LL BUY PAINTINGS FROM ME IF THEY'RE LIKE THE OTHER ONE. AND IF I HAVE TO WATCH THEIR BLOOD SPILL AND SEE THEIR AGONY TO GET INSPIRATION.. ALL THE BETTER! I *LIKE* TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE IN PAIN!



THE EVENING FOG CLOSED IN AROUND THE HUNCHED FIGURE STANDING ON THE BRIDGE. ALL EVIDENCE OF THE PREVIOUS ACCIDENT HAD LONG SINCE BEEN REMOVED, BUT THE ARTIST WAITED FOR HOURS.. HOPING, PRAYING THAT ANOTHER ACCIDENT WOULD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY OCCUR..

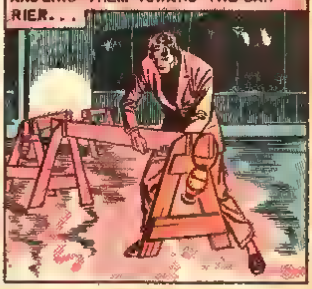


HE LOOKED AT THE DETOUR SIGNS WITH THEIR RED LANTERNS, USED TO RE-ROUTE TRAFFIC WHILE THE SMASHED AUTO HAD BEEN CLEARED AWAY. HE LOOKED AT THEM STANDING IDLY, INNOCENTLY ON THE WALK ..AND THE HOURS SLIPPED BY...

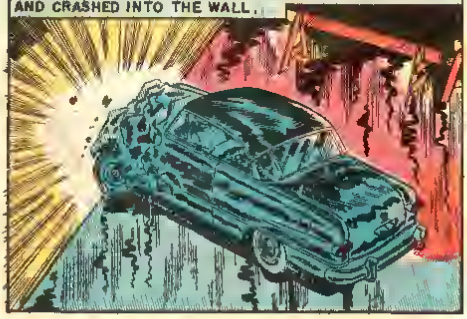


IT WAS ALMOST MIDNIGHT WHEN, IN DESPAIR, HE LEFT THE BRIDGE TO PROWL THE STREETS. *SOMEWHERE* IN THE CITY THERE MUST BE ANGUISH AND BLOODSHED. WHY DID THEY *HIDE* IT FROM HIM? WHY DID THET FRUSTRATE AND TORMENT HIM SO? HE *MUST* FIND INSPIRATION...

AT THREE A.M. HE AGAIN TRUDDED OUT ON THE BRIDGE. THE CITY HAD SUCCESSFULLY HID ITS SINS FROM HIM THUS FAR, BUT HE WAS NOT TO BE PUT OFF. HE LIFTED THE DETOUR SIGNS AND SET THEM IN THE ROAD, ANDLING THEM TOWARD THE BARRIER...



HE HAD TO WAIT BUT A SHORT WHILE BEFORE HE HEARD THE HUMMING OF TIRES ON MOIST PAVEMENT DRAWING RAPIDLY NEAR. THE CAR ROCKETED OUT OF THE FOG AND WITH A SCREECHING OF BRAKES, SWERVED TO AVOID THE SIGNS! HE LAUGHED DIABOLICALLY AS IT CAREENED AND CRASHED INTO THE WALL.



HE RACED TO THE WRECKAGE AND PEERED INSIDE, LAUGHING AS HE SAW THE BROKEN BODIES, FLOWING BLOOD. HE REJOICED IN THE MOANS AND SCREAMS, DANCED MERRILY AND CLAPPED HIS HANDS AND LAUGHED TILL HIS HEAD SPUN IN A WHIRLPOOL OF SUBLIME INSPIRATION...

MORNING. EXHAUSTION. THE FINISHED PAINTING. THE OLD MAN CACKLING AND GIVING HIM MONEY... DELIRIUM...

POSITIVELY FANTASTIC! HEH, HEH! SUCH SADISTIC LUST! YOU MUST PAINT *MORE* OF THESE FOR ME! I'LL PAY YOU *WELL!*

NIGHT. THE FOG-SHROUDED BRIDGE. CONFUSED, HATEFUL EMOTIONS AND THE IMPATIENCE OF WAITING. THE DECISION TO WAIT NO LONGER FOR AN ACCIDENT. THE SHEER THRILL OF VICIOUSLY BEATING A PASSERBY.

HIS ROOM. THE STRAW COT FEELING AGAIN THE WARM BLOOD, HEARING AGAIN THE TERRIFIED CRIES, RELIVING THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE... BUT *PAINTING NOTHING!* NOT CARING TO PAINT. JUST REVELING IN THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION...

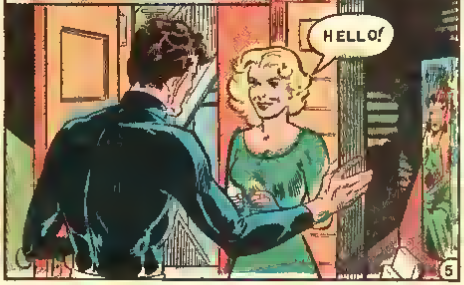
MORNING AGAIN... A BLANK CANVAS . AND A REALIZATION.

OH, GOD, I MUST BE *INSANE!* IS MY MIND SO TWISTED THAT I CAUSE BLOOD TO FLOW MERELY FOR THE THRILL I DERIVE FROM ITS SIGHT? AM I SO ENVIOUS OF THE WORLD THAT I REJOICE IN THEIR SUFFERING? WHEN IT INSPIRED A PAINTING, THERE WAS A *PURPOSE*. BUT NOW... NOW MY DEPRAVITY HAS REACHED ITS LOWEST DEPTHS! I'VE GOT TO *STOP* THIS MADNESS!

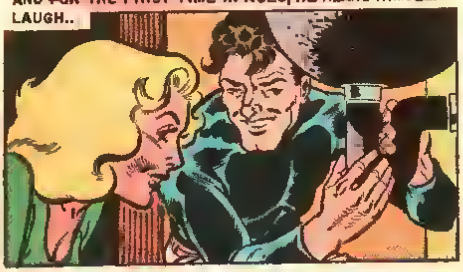
FOR DAYS HE REMAINED IN HIS SHABBY ROOM TRYING TO STIFLE THE URGE TO HURT SOMEONE, TRYING TO FORGET THE SATISFACTION HE RECEIVED FROM PUNISHING THE WORLD AS THE WORLD HAD SO OFTEN PUNISHED HIM...

HE PACED THE SMALL FLOOR, ANIMAL-LIKE, SMOKED ENDLESS CHAINS OF CIGARETTES, DRANK HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR, AND STILL HE FELT THE NEED FOR RELEASE... STILL HE HEARD THE OLD MAN'S PLEAS FOR MORE PICTURES, FELT THE OLD MAN'S MONEY, DREAMED OF THE THINGS HE COULD BUY ..

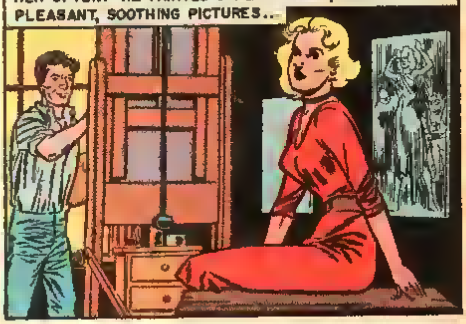
AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS STRUGGLE, WHEN HIS STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION WERE ALMOST AT THE BREAKING POINT AND HE WAS DISCOURAGED AND MISERABLE BEYOND WORDS, THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HE OPENED IT, AND THERE SHE WAS, SMILING AND BEAUTIFUL, FILLING EVERY CORNER OF HIS BARREN ROOM WITH A WARM BRILLIANCE. IT STAGGERED HIM...



SHE HAD JUST MOVED IN UPSTAIRS AND NEEDED HIS AID TO COMPLETE SOME SMALL TASK. HE ACCEPTED GLADLY... AND WHILE HE HELPED HER, LISTENED TO HER TENDER VOICE, REVELED IN HER MELODIOUS LAUGH, HER RADIANT LOVELINESS. EYES UNBELIEVING, HE MARVELED AT THIS WONDROUS CREATURE WHO LESSENED HIS TENSIONS, DISPELLED HIS HATES, HIS FEARS.. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES, HE HEARD HIMSELF LAUGH..

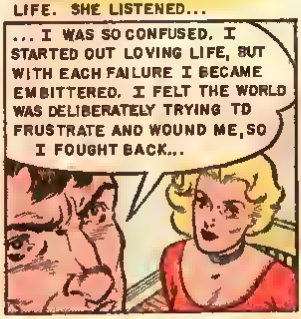


THAT NIGHT HE SLEPT THE SLEEP OF THE INNOCENT, AND DREAMED THE DREAMS OF THE PEACEFUL. IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, HE REALIZED SHE LIKED HIS COMPANY AND WANTED TO BE WITH HIM. HE PAINTED HER OFTEN. HE PAINTED OTHER THINGS, ALSO... PLEASANT, SOOTHING PICTURES...

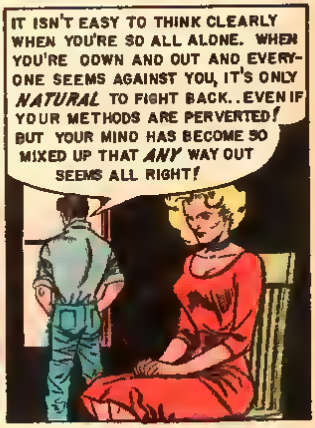


BUT THOUGH HE LAUGHED QUITE EASILY NOW, THERE DWELT WITHIN HIM THE GUILT AND SHAME OF HIS PAST. HE LONGED TO TELL HER OF THESE THINGS, TO CLEANSE HIMSELF AS SHE WAS CLEAN...

SO HE CONFESSED THE HORRIBLE EMOTIONS, THE VILE DEEDS THAT ONCE CONSUMED HIS SOUL, BLACKENED HIS HEART AND CAUSED HIM TO DESPISE THE GOODNESS IN LIFE. SHE LISTENED...



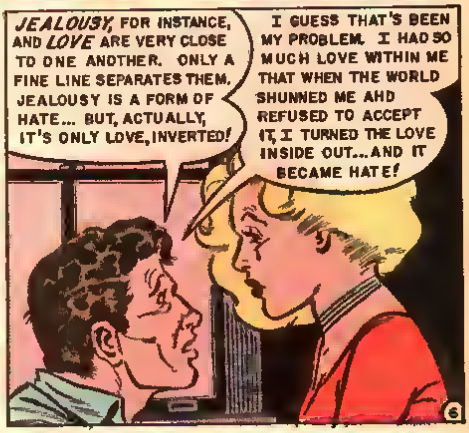

IT ISN'T EASY TO THINK CLEARLY WHEN YOU'RE SO ALL ALONE. WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT AND EVERYONE SEEMS AGAINST YOU, IT'S ONLY *NATURAL* TO FIGHT BACK.. EVEN IF YOUR METHODS ARE PERVERTED! BUT YOUR MIND HAS BECOME SO MIXED UP THAT *ANY* WAY OUT SEEMS ALL RIGHT!

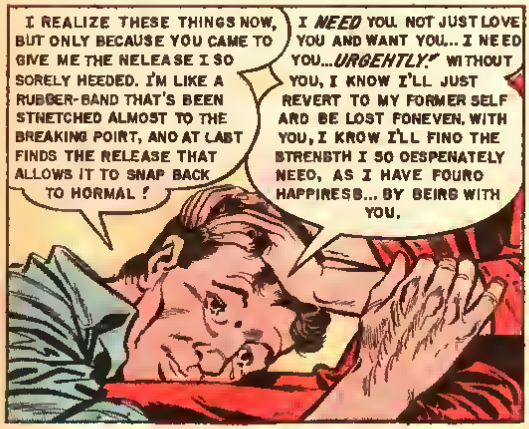


PERHAPS IT'S MERELY THAT BECAUSE A MAN HAS SO MANY EMOTIONS INSIDE HIM, ANYTHING THAT IGNITES THEM WILL CAUSE THEM TO EXPLODE. THE MORE EMOTIONS THERE ARE INSIDE AND THE LONGER THEY'VE BEEN CONFINED, THE GREATER THE EXPLOSION AND IF THEY CAN'T FIND ESCAPE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION... THEY'RE *BOUND* TO *BACKFIRE*...

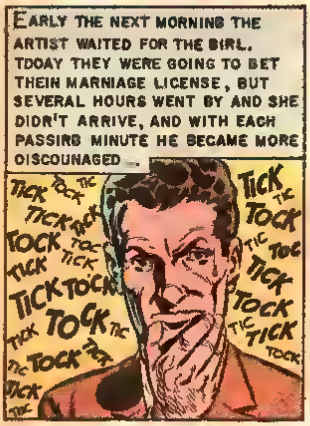
*JEALOUSY*, FOR INSTANCE, AND *LOVE* ARE VERY CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER. ONLY A FINE LINE SEPARATES THEM. JEALOUSY IS A FORM OF HATE... BUT, ACTUALLY, IT'S ONLY LOVE, INVERTED!

I GUESS THAT'S BEEN MY PROBLEM. I HAD SO MUCH LOVE WITHIN ME THAT WHEN THE WORLD SHUNNED ME AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT, I TURNED THE LOVE INSIDE OUT... AND IT BECAME HATE!




I REALIZE THESE THINGS NOW, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU CAME TO GIVE ME THE RELEASE I SO SORELY NEEDED. I'M LIKE A RUBBER-BAND THAT'S BEEN STRETCHED ALMOST TO THE BREAKING POINT, AND AT LAST FINDS THE RELEASE THAT ALLOWS IT TO SNAP BACK TO NORMAL!
I NEED YOU. NOT JUST LOVE YOU AND WANT YOU... I NEED YOU...URGENTLY! WITHOUT YOU, I KNOW I'LL JUST REVERT TO MY FORMER SELF AND BE LOST FOREVER. WITH YOU, I KNOW I'LL FIND THE STRENGTH I SO DESPERATELY NEED, AS I HAVE FOUND HAPPINESS... BY BEING WITH YOU.

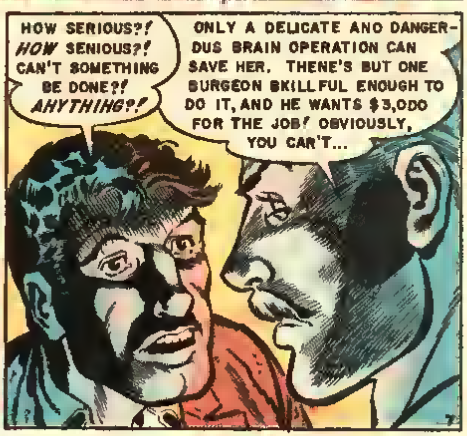
THERE WAS A SILENCE. THEN, TENDERLY, SHE CUPPED HIS FACE IN HER HANDS AND SAID THE WORDS THAT ALL HIS LIFE, IT SEEMED, HE HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR..
...I LOVE YOU... I...I WANT TO BE YOUR WIFE.


EARLY THE NEXT MORNING THE ARTIST WAITED FOR THE GIRL. TODAY THEY WERE GOING TO GET THEIR MARRIAGE LICENSE, BUT SEVERAL HOURS WENT BY AND SHE DIDN'T ARRIVE, AND WITH EACH PASSING MINUTE HE BECAME MORE DISCOURAGED...
TICK TOCK TIC

BY MID-AFTERNOON HE WAS AT HIS WIT'S-END. HE STORMED ABOUT HIS ROOM IN A FRENZY...
SHE'S LEFT ME! I TOLD HER THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF AND FRIGHTENED HER AWAY! OH GOD, WHAT AM I TO DO WITHOUT HER? WHAT AM I TO DO?

LATE EVENING. THE FRUSTRATED, TORTUOUS SOBBING, THE URGE STIRRING DEEP IN HIS BREAST, GROWING MUCH STRONGER, TO HURT SOMEONE. THE TELEGRAM FROM THE HOSPITAL..
SHE...SHE'S BEEN INJURED... CONDITION CRITICAL!... CALLING FOR ME.. CALLING FOR ME?!

A MAD RACE THROUGH THE STREETS, TEARS STREAKING HIS FACE, HER NAME TRAILING BEHIND HIM OR THE RAIN DROPS, AND THEN, WHITENESS. WHITENESS EVERYWHERE. WALLS, ROOMS, CLOTHING... AND THEN, THE DOCTOR...
THEY BROUGHT HER IN LAST NIGHT.. HIT AND RUN VICTIM. SHE CAME OUT OF HER COMA LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, BUT I'M AFRAID THERES VERY LITTLE HOPE. HER CONDITION IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS.


HOW SERIOUS?! HOW SERIOUS?! CAN'T SOMETHING BE DONE?! ANYTHING?!
ONLY A DELICATE AND DANGEROUS BRAIN OPERATION CAN SAVE HER. THERE'S BUT ONE SURGEON SKILLFUL ENOUGH TO DO IT, AND HE WANTS $3,000 FOR THE JOB! OBVIOUSLY, YOU CAN'T...

THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS?! MIGHT AS WELL BE A MILLION... BUT HE COULD GET IT! THERE WAS ONE WAY TO GET IT... A PAIHTING FOR THE DLD MAH. THE ARTIST WENT INSTINCTIVELY TO THE BNIDGE...
THE LONG WAITIHG, ANOTHEN THE CLICKIHG OF HEELS, THE FIGURE DISEMBOOYING ITSELF FROM THE MIST AHO RAIN, FUSING INTO SOLIOITY. THE STNUGGLE, THE HACKING AND BLOODYING, THE SHAPPIHG OF THE NECK! THE THRILLING, GLOATING, DIZZYING REEL OF SATISFACTION..
HIS ROOM. THE HECTIC WIELDING OF BNUSHES OH CANVAS, LASTING TILL LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON. THE OLD MAN'S REFUSAL TO PAY THE STEEP PNICE! THE QUARREL AND THE FIGHT. THE TAKING OF THE MOHEY BY FORCE..
THE HEADLONG DASH BACK TD THE HOSPITAL TNNOUGH DANKEHIHG STREETS, BUBBLING WITH THE HAPPY KNOWLEDGE THAT AT LAST HE HAD DEFEATED THE WORLO. THEIN FINAL ATTEMPT TO RUIN HIM HAD FAILED, FOR DIDN'T HE HAVE THE MONEY? JOYFULLY, HE RUSHEOIN...
SEE? SEE, DOCTOR? (GASP!) ALL THE MONEY? YOU CAN SAVE HER NOW, (GASP!) CAN'T YOU? YOU CAN SAVE HER FDR ME?
THE PAIHED LOOK IN THE DOCTOR'S EYES. THE NURSE LOWERING HER HEAD, TURHING HER BACK...
I'M.. I'M AFRAID I HAVE BAD NEWS FON YOU. YOU SEE, THE ONE MAN WHO COULD HAVE PENFONMED THE OPERATION... WAS BRUTALLY MURDERED LAST NIGHT WHILE CROSSING THE BRIDGE ON HIS WAY TO THE HOSPITAL! MUST HAVE BEEN THE WONK OF A MANIAC... NECK BROKEN... HACKEO TO PIECES... HORRIBLE!
THE MISERABLE WRETCH SAT HUDDLEO ON THE BENCH IN THE DARK CORRIDOR. LITTENING THE FLOOR ANOUND HIS FEET WAS A GREEN CONFUSION, USELESS AND FORGOTTEN. HE SAT THERE, TEANS STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, TIHY, PITIFUL SOBS RACKING HIS BODY. HE SAT THERE, STANING BLANKLY AT THE WALL, LISTENING TD THE CLOCK OVERHEAO RELENTLESSLY TICK AWAY THE SECONOS... ANO THEN SHE WDULD BE DEAD...
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TICK
-THE END-
HEH, HEH! CARE FOR A GAME OF BRIDGE, ANYONE? YOU BE THE DUMMY! BY DOING THOSE PAINTINGS, THE ANTIST GAVE HIS GIRL THE BRUSH DFF! DIL I KNOW IS, NOBODY BETTEN GO WALKING ON THAT BRIOGE LATE AT NIGHT! HEH, HEH! WELL, I SEE THE CRYPT-KEEPER IS CHOMPING AT THE BIT, SO I'LL LEAVE BEFORE HE STARTS CHOMPING ME! HE'S GOT A PEACHY STORY FOR YOU, SO UNTIL NEXT TIME DRDP DEAD!

# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH. AND NOW IT'S YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER'S* TURN TO CURDLE YOUR BLOOD. CRAWL INTO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*, CRUMBS, PLOP DOWN ON THAT TREE STUMP THERE, HELP YOURSELF TO SOME FRUIT, AND WHILE YOU'RE MUNCHING, I'LL NARRATE THE NAUSEATING NOVELETTE I CALL...

## A PEACH OF A PLOT!

MICHAEL LANE TURNED AWAY, FIGHTING THE NAUSEA THAT SWEPT OVER HIM. BESIDE HIM, LIEUTENANT PHIL DOLAN, HOMICIDE, STARED AT THE CORPSE LYING AMID THE TWISTING TANGLING ROOTS OF THE YOUNG PEACH TREE. HE STARED AT THE HOLES WHERE EYES ONCE SHINED, AT THE MOUTH THAT WAS ONCE SO KISSABLE, AT THE CRAWLING FLESH OF THE ONCE LOVELY NECK, AND AT THE TREE TRUNK ERUPTING FROM THE ROTTED CHEST...

THE DETECTIVE INTERNUPTED HIM...
IF IT WENEN'T FON PEACNES, EH, LANE? YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITN MURDER IF IT WENEN'T FON PEACHES.
IT'S CRAZY. A THING LIKE THIS CAN'T NAPPEN..
AH, BUT IT DID, LANE. AND YOU'LL BURN BECAUSE IT NAPPENED. TOU PLANNED ON MURDERING SARAH, DIDN'T YOU? YOU PLANNED IT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING! CANE TO TELL ME THE WHOLE THING NOW?
I... I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.
THEN I'LL TELL YOU, LANE. SEVEN YEARS IS A LONG TIME. LONG ENOUGH TO DO A LOT OF SEARCHING AND ASKING, LOOKING FOR PIECES TO A PICTURE-PUZZLE, AND LAYING EACH PIECE IN...WHERE IT FITS. TONIGHT, I FOUND THE FINAL PIECES TO THE PUZZLE. TOHIGHT, THE PICTURE IS COMPLETE. SO, I'LL TELL YOU.
'YOU MET SANAH BRANDON AT A COCKTAIL PARTY IN 1848. SHE WAS RICH AND LOVELY AND YOU WANTED MONEY. YOU STARTED WONKING ON HER, UNTIL FINALLY..!
OH, MIKE, DANLING. WE'LL BE SO HAPPY. WE'LL LIVE AT MY COUNTRY PLACE AND...
NOW WAIT A MINUTE, SARAH, DEAN. I INTEND TO SUPPORT YOU. AFTER ALL, I WANT TO MANRY TOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, NOT BECAUSE OF YOUN MONEY...
'SHE BELIEVED YOU, OIDN'T SHE, LANE? SHE NEALLY BELIEVED THAT TOU LOVED HER AND NOT HER MONEY. SO YOU WENE MARNIED. BUT AFTER THE HONEYMOON, YOU DID COME OUT HERE TO LIVE...TO SARAH'S COUNTRY HOME...!
ONLY TILL I GET LOCATED, HONEY! I'M A LITTLE FLAT, NOW.
I UNDERSTANO, MIKE.
'AND THEN YOU WAITED. TOU WAITED UNTIL PEOPLE BEGAN TO TALK...'
THERE GOES THAT MICHAEL LANE IN HIS WIFE'S FLASHY CAR. MANRIED HER FON HER MONEY, TNAT'S WHAT HE DIO!
YOU'D THINK A MAN WOULD HAVE A LITTLE PRIDE AND TRY TO EANN HIS OWN MONEY!
'BUT NOT YOU, LANE! YOU HAD PLANS. BIG PLANS. AHD YOU WANTED PEOPLE TO TALK LIKE THAT. TOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO BET A JOB...TO EANN YOUR OWN KEEP. BUT SANAH DIDN'T CARE. SHE LOVED YOU TOO MUCH. SHE DIDN'T MIND YOUR LIVING OFF HEN INCOME...'
... AHD TOU DON'T MIND WHAT PEOPLE ANE SAYING?
OF COURSE I DON'T MIND, DANLING. I OON'T MIND IF YOU NEVER GO TO WONK. I LIKE YOU BEING NEAR ME ALL DAY LONG.
2

'IT WAS FRUSTRATING, WASN'T IT LANE? YOU WANTED SARAH TO MIND. IT WAS PART OF THE SCHEME. YOU EVEN BEGAN TAKING ADVANTAGE...TRTING TO ANTAGONIZE HER...'
BUT, MIKE. TOU CAN USE MY CAR WHENEVER TOU WANT TO. WHY DO WE NEED TWO...
I WANT MT OWN, SARAH! I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO ASK YOU ALL THE TIME...
'AND FINALLY SHE BROKE DOWN. FINALLY...SHE BLEW UP. AND THOUGH YOU TRIED TO ACT HURT, SECRETLT YOU WERE GLAD...'
A NEW CAR! TOUR OWN APARTMENT IN TOWN! MORE CLOTHES THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY NEED! IS IT TRUE, MIKE? IS IT TRUE WHAT THET'RE ALL SAYING?
SARAH!
'...SO YOU PRESSED THE ARGUMENT...'
IT IS TRUE, ISN'T IT? THAT'S ALL YOU MARRIED ME FOR? MT MONEY!
SO WHAT! IT'S A FAIR TRADE. WE EACH HAVE WHAT WE WANTED.
'...CREATED QUITE A SCENE...'
YOU...NEVER WANTED...ME! YOU NEVER LOVED ME!
THE DOUGH, BABY! I LOVED TNE DOUGH!
'...AND THE SERVANTS HEARD IT ALL. JUST WHAT YOU WANTED...'
THEN...THEN IT'S NO USE GOING ON...SOB... LIKE...THIS!
THERE'S THE DOOR!
'YOU'D TIMED IT PERFECTLY, EH, LANE? THE SERVANTS HAD GONE FOR THE DAY BY THE TIME SARAH HAD FINISHED PACKING...'
I'M...LEAVING, MIKE. I'M GOING TO GET A DIVORCE.
YOU'RE A LITTLE FOOL, SARAH. HOW COULD TOU BELIEVE THAT OF ME?
'IT WAS WHAT SHE WANTED YO HEAR, WASN'T IT, LANE? SUDDENLY SHE WAS IN YOUR ARMS AND YOU WERE HOLDING HER QUIVERING BODY AND HATING HER AND SATING THE THINGS TOU HAD TO SAT...'
OH, MIKE. MIKE. TELL ME IT ISN'T TRUE.
OF COURSE IT ISN'T TRUE, DARLING. I MARRIED YOU BECAUSE I LOVED YOU. YOU'LL SEE. I'LL MAKE IT UP. TOMORROW, I'LL LOOK FOR A JOB. REALLY...

'THAT LAST NIGHT WAS FUN, WASN'T IT LANE? MAKING LOVE TO HER, AND WAITING...WAITING TO CATCH HER OFF GUARD...'
I'M SO ASHAMED, MIKE! I'M SORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS I SAID.
I'M THE ONE THAT'S SORRY, HONEY!
'AND THEN YOU FOUND YOUR OPPORTUNITY! REMEMBER, LANE? SHE WAS SITTING IN THE LIVING ROOM MUNCHING ON SOME FRUIT. THE BLINDS WERE DRAWN. IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT...'
HUHGRY, SARAH?
A LITTLE...
'REMEMBER THE PEACH, LANE? SHE HAD A MOUTHFUL WHEN YOU STRUCK HER WITH THE POKER...'
GGGGHHHH...
'REMEMBER THE GURGLING SOUND THAT SHE MADE AND THE PEACH JUICE DRIBBLING OUT OF HER MOUTH AND HER EYES BULGING AND HER FACE TURNING BLUE AS YOU BEAT HER TO DEATH? REMEMBER, LANE...?'
'REMEMBER HOW YOU CARRIED HER LIMP BODY OUT OF THE HOUSE AND BURIED IT OUT IN THE BACK GARDEN...?'
'THEN, YOU BURNED HER SUITCASE... THE ONE SHE'D PACKED... IN THE FIREPLACE...'
'...AND CLEANED UP. REMEMBER HOW YOU SCOOPED UP THE HALF-CHEWED MOUTHFUL OF PEACH FROM THE RUG WHERE IT HAD FALLEN FROM HER LIPS AND THREW IT AWAY TOGETHER WITH THE UNEATEN HALF OF THE PEACH...?'

LIEUTENANT OOLAN POINTED TO THE ROTTED CORPSE WITH THE TREE ROOTS TWINING AROUND IT AND THE TRUNK GROWING FROM ITS CHEST...
YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THAT THE PEACH PIT WAS MISSING, DID YOU, LANE? YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT SARAH HAD SWALLOWED IT AS YOU STRANGLED HER!
'YOU CALLED US THE NEXT DAY. YOU REPORTED THAT YOUR WIFE WAS MISSING, AND I CAME OVER.'
SOME OF HER CLOTHES ARE GONE, LIEUTENANT OOLAN. DO YOU THINK SHE'S LEFT ME?
DID YOU AND YOUR WIFE GET ALONG, MR. LANE? ANY ARGUMENTS?
WELL, YES. WE DID HAVE AN ARGUMENT LAST NIGHT. SHE ACCUSED ME OF MARRYING HER FOR HER MONEY!
I SEE. WELL, WE'LL TRY TO TRACE HER, MR LANE. DON'T WORRY! I'M SURE SHE'S ALL RIGHT.
'THAT WAS WHEN I GOT SUSPICIOUS, LANE! WHEN A WIFE WALKS OUT ON HER HUSBAND, SHE'S USUALLY EASY TO TRACE. A TRAIN RESERVATION. A PLANE TICKET. SOMETHING...'
YOUR WIFE JUST SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED, MR. LANE.
SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER. I KNOW IT. OH, LORD... IF SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE...
'PEOPLE WHO PLAN ON SUICIDE DON'T PACK BAGS, LANE! I STARTED ASKING QUESTIONS. THE SERVANTS...'
YES. THEY ARGUED THAT NIGHT! SHE THREATENED TO LEAVE!
HE ADMITTED HE DIDN'T LOVE HER. THAT IT WAS HER MONEY...
I SEE! WELL... THANKS...
'REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO YOU...'
I THINK YOU MURDERED HER, LANE! IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO, I'LL PROVE IT.
YOU'RE CRAZY, DOLAN! I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY.
'YOU GOT A LITTLE WORNIED, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU DECIDED TO TAKE A LITTLE TRIP. WERE THINGS GETTING TOO HOT FOR YOU...?'
I JUST THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW. I HAVE TO GO TO EUROPE... ON BUSINESS. IF YOU FIND MY WIFE, GET IN TOUCH WITH ME, WON'T YOU?
SURE, MR. LANE! SURE!
5

'YOU STAYED AWAY, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU STAYED AWAY FOR SEVEN YEARS. YOU FIGUREO YOU'D COME BACK AND YOUR WIFE WOULD BE LESALLY DEAD AND HER FORTUNE WOULD BE YOURS. BUT I DION'T GIVE UP, LANE. I KEPT PLUGGING...'
HMMMM. PERHAPS HE BURIED HER OUT HERE IN THE GARDER. IT'S SO OVERGROWN NOW, I COULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. I'D HAVE TO OIG THE WHOLE PLACE UP!
'YOU LET YOUR COUNTRY PLACE GO TO RUIN! YOU OIDN'T WANT ARYBODY TERDING THE GARDER, DIGGING AROUND. SO NO ONE NOTICED THE GREEN SHOOT POP THROUGH THE GROUND OVER SARAH'S GRAVE...'
I KNOW HE MURDERED HER! I KNOW IT! IF I COULD ONLY FIND OUT WHAT HE DID WITH HER BODY. IF I ORLY KNEW WHERE TO LOOK!
'THE YEARS PASSED AND THE GREER SHOOT BECAME A STALK...'
'...THEN A YOUNG TREE...'
'...GROWING STRONGER WITH EACH PASSING SUMMER...'
'...UNTIL, LAST WEEK... IT BORE FRUIT... A PEACH...'
I'D HEARD YOU WERE COMING HOME TO CLAIM SARAH'S FORTUNE. TODAY, WHER YOU ARRIVED, I WAS WAITING...'
WELL! LIEUTENANT DOLAN. WELCOMING ME HOME I SEE! NEVER FOUND MY WIFE, EH? TOO BAD!
NO, LANE. YOU WERE TOO CLEVER. I STILL SAY YOU MURDERED HER, BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT.
'YOU WERE TRIUMPHANT, WEREN'T YOU, LANE? YOU INVITED ME IN. YOU GLOATED. AND THEN, YOU SPOTTED THE TREE...'
... YOU KNOW, DOLAR! SEVEN YEARS? HER FORTUNE IS MINE... NOW... I... I...
WHAT IS IT, LANE? WHAT DO YOU SEE?
6

'YOU TRIED TO COVER UP YOUR SHOCK AT SEEING THE PEACH TREE GROWING OUT OF SARAH'S GRAVE. YOU MADE A FEEBLE EXPLANATION..'
IT'S... IT'S JUST...THAT THE GARDEN IS SO NEGLECTED.
YES. IT *IS* A SHAME. IS THAT A YOUNG *PEACH* TREE, LANE?
'YOU WERE PRETTY GOOD AT COMPOSING YOURSELF, LANE. I LIKED THE WAY YOU STRODE OVER TO THE TREE...SMILING..'
*WELL!* SO IT *IS!* I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN I'D *PLANTED* IT! *LOOK!* IT'S *BORNE FRUIT.*
I DIDN'T KNOW *YOU* LIKED PEACHES, LANE! I KNOW YOUR *WIFE* DID!
'...HOW NAPPILY YOU PLUCKED THE PEACH FROM ITS LIMB...'
ME? I *LOVE* PEACHES!
'...AND SANK YOUR TEETH INTO ITS PULPY SUCCULENT MEAT...'
'...AND HOW THE SICKLY RED LIQUID SPLATTERED OUT, OVER YOUR FACE, INTO YOUR MOUTH, GAGGING YOU WITH ITS SALTY RICHNESS, COVERING YOUR SHIRT WITH A CRIMSON SMEAR...'
*GOOD LORD!* CHOKE..
*BLOOD!*
THEY WERE LIFTING THE FOUL-SMELLING, DECAYED CORPSE AND CARRYING IT OFF. MICHAEL RETCHED, LOOKING DOWN AT HIS BLOOD-SOAKED SHIRT. LIEUTENANT DOLAN SMILED...
YES, LANE! IT *WAS* BLOOD. *HUMAN BLOOD!* SO I KNEW WHERE TO *LOOK!* I *KNEW THEN* WHERE SARAH WAS *BURIED!*
THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN...CHOKE
HEH, HEH. NOW WASN'T THAT A *JUICY PEACH* OF A YARN, KIDDIES? OF COURSE IT WAS A *BLOODY SHAME* THAT MIKE *PIT OFF MORE* THAN HE COULD *CHEW.* BY THE WAY! I'VE TAKEN SOME *CUTTINGS* FROM THE *TREE* GROWING FROM SARAH'S *CHEST.* I'M GOING INTO THE *NURSERY BUSINESS,* LANDSCAPING *VAMPIRE GARDENS!* NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO *THE VAULT-KEEPER!* 'BYE!

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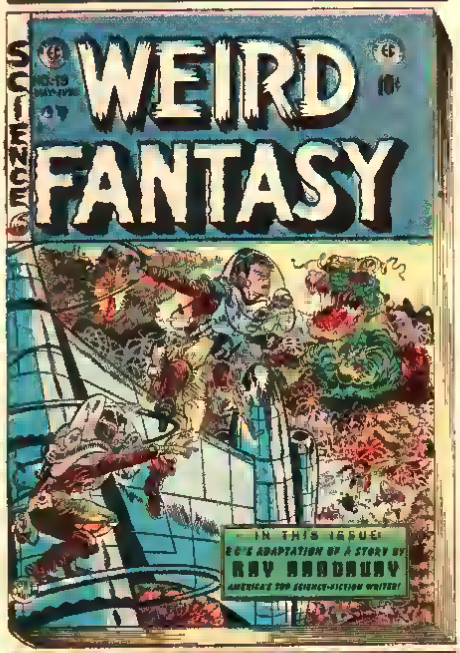


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# ONE SHOT

Through the bushes, where he crouched, Metcalf could see the man standing high above him, looking out over the valley from what seemed the very edge of the towering cliff. Silhouetted that way against the pale noonday sky, the rankest beginner would find it hard to miss the kind of target the man presented. And, Metcalf reflected, *he* was far from an amateur when it came to firearms. This was the moment he had been anticipating so long . . .

For a whole minute, hidden there among the scrub brush near the foot of the sheer rock wall, Metcalf sighted along his rifle barrel. When he finally squeezed the trigger, it was almost with a feeling of sadness that he must finally relinquish this complete control over the destiny of the creature up there above him. The shot that sounded clangorously through the canyon was almost an anticlimax. Then, for a second, there was a surge of exhilaration as Metcalf saw the man spin, sprawl out in space and plummet down a thousand feet . . . a flailing and most ungraceful object amidst the hail of rock which crashed to the valley floor with a reverberating hiss

It was only a few seconds later that Metcalf came crashing through the underbrush and knelt beside the man he had just murdered. The sight was one of utter revulsion: Metcalf felt the triumph was a hollow one when he saw the pitiable object he had finally conquered. For a long moment he glared at the dead man he had hated for so many years . . . the man who had sworn that someday he

would bring about Metcalf's own death.

Metcalf straightened up and a smile slowly thawed his grim features. One mote shot, he thought, would make it appear . . . to anyone in the vicinity . . . that there had been an *exchange* of bullets: that he had fired in self-defense. His rifle swung out in front of him and, once again, he sighted along its shining length. Slowly he zeroed in on a solitary rock far above him. His fingers tightened and he felt the gun buck against his shoulder; far above he saw the rock disintegrate into a thousand pieces. With a broad grin he lowered the gun and began to retrace his steps into the undergrowth. Like the sound of an oncoming wave, at that moment, he heard the sound billowing up there on the cliff. The smile vanished from his face in the next instant; the rock he had smashed had evidently dislodged another rock . . . and *that* one still another. The whole mountain seemed to be crumbling . . . cascading down upon him . . . !

He dropped his gun and started to run, but already the first loosened stones were pelting him . . . stinging against his face and chest, and thudding painfully into his skin. He screamed once . . . but the sound was drowned beneath the raging thunder which was engulfing the valley.

He slipped and sprawled full length; then the whole cliff seemed to explode down upon him. The word "landslide" entered his hysterical brain . . . and he felt the crunch of sharp stone piercing his lungs, crushing his arms, pinning him there under a blanket of rock. A final meteor seemed to be plunging straight at him . . . and he shut his eyes in horror, just a fraction of a second before it smashed his face into a thousand agonized splinters, pounding him like grains of sand beneath a savage steel-shod boot . . .

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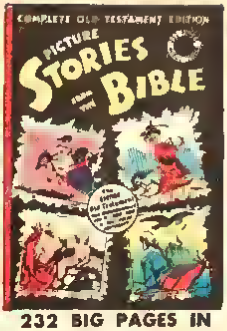


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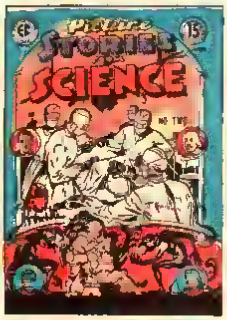


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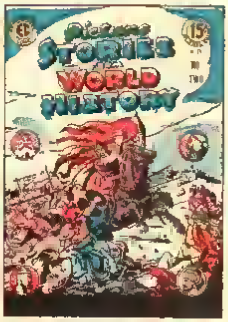


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# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! Well, I've another Bradbury for you this issue! If you'll just shift your eyes right . . . WHOA, THERE! NOT NOW! LATER! . . you'll find "The Lake," masterpieced by Oozing Jee Orlando. And now for some comments on Bradbury's "Let's Play Poison," which appeared in Vault of Horror No 29!

*Dear Vault-Keeper,*

*The story by Mr. B., as you call him, sure was a thriller! I hope you have many more of this type. I recommend your comic to all of my friends. All of your stories are really good! (And of course, that's what we're paying our dimes for!)*

*Montana Lamb*
*Brookline, Mass*

*Dear V.K.,*

*Ray Bradbury is the best horror writer in the business, bar none! And I'm glad to see a teaming up between Ray and E.C. I'm also glad to see that the picture of you in the circle on the cover has finally been brought up to date, so that it looks like you! I hope the other two GhouLunatics get their pictures modernized too.*

*Don Thompson*
*Grand Valley, Pa.*

As you can see by a quick glance at the cover of this here issue, Don, a complete new set of putrid portraits, miserably modernized by our respective boys . . Johnny Coffin Craig, Drooling Jack Davis and Ghastly Graham Ingels has replaced the out moded set.

*Dear Slop-face,*

*After reading V.H No. 29, I'm convinced that Jack Davis is THE artist to do the Bradbury stories! No one can approach him!*

*Peter Kroll*
*Delphi Ind.*

Jack does a fine job, Pete . . no doubt about it! But take the job Joe Orlando does on "The Lake," which starts on the page facing this one . . WHOA, THERE! NOT YET! LATER!

*Dear Vault-Keeper,*

*As far as I'm concerned, E.C. is the only comic book publishing company in the world. It makes me sick to see how those imitators copy you! Heck, I'd rather have ONE E.C. mag, than a hundred of those maggot-infested, slimy, putrid, cruddy, vulgar . . well I'll leave the other adjectives up to you. I sure do like Ray Bradbury. How about a thing like that "Artist-of-the Issue" business, but call it the "Writer-of-the Issue."*

*Ted Finch*
*(no address given)*

Mr. Bradbury's mug appears on the inside front cover of this issue, Ted. As to the "other adjectives" you left up to me, I will in turn leave them up to my other readers!

*Dear Vault-Keeper,*

*I've just read your pitiful little tale (in V.H. No. 29) of how much of a struggle you have to put up with. I thought I would peck out a few words of encouragement to you and tell you how much I enjoy your mag. Although I am a college student, and theoretically supposed to be above perusing such literature, I get a large charge from yours, and all the other E.C. publications. My gal buys them, every one, and I borrow or steal them as soon as I can. Even a cynical old pal of mine, who doesn't like anything or anybody, enjoys your comics to the hilt. He likes the art-work (he says). I believe you monsters will outlast all the rest of the newsstands. There're plenty of us horror-hungry, half-witted college Joes to keep your mags going.*

*Ronald M. Wade*
*Commerce, Texas*

*Dear Vault-Keeper,*

*We just wanted to thank you for all the nice things you said about us, the readers of E.C. We are happy to know that we are helping, in a small way, to keep E.C. head and shoulders above the rest of the comic magazine publishing companies. That's the way it always has been, and always will be.*

*Matt Flynn and Norman Benedict*
*(no address given)*

So WHO said nice things? So WHO writes pitiful little tales of woe? Me? WHOA THERE! NOT ME! THEM! THE EDITORS! THE MAGGOT-INFESTED, SLIMY, PUTRID, CRUDDY, VULGAR IDIOT EDITORS! THEY took my column from me, and THEY sobbed out their tale, and THEY said nice things, and THEY are looking to make money, and THEY don't give ME none, so I don't give a howling hoot what happens! (WHOA THERE! NOT NOW! AND NOT LATER, EITHER, YOU FLEA BITTEN, VINEGAR-VEINED OLD WIND-BAG! Let US take over at this point! Seriously, readers, we'd like to thank you for the very nice letters you've sent us in response to the appeal for your support that we made to you in V.H. No. 29. Just to keep you posted on the latest events bearing on the over-crowding of titles . . . and subsequent poor-sales . . , situations in the comic industry, we have it on fairly reliable authority that practically every comic publisher is in the process of dropping titles and curtailing activities, that three of the larger ones have suspended operations, and that at least one other has permanently left the scene! We at E.C. will continue to publish . . . at least for the time being . . our entire line of ten titles. Again, we thank you! O.K., V.K.! Take over! You have just enough space left to remind everyone that the Third Annual TALES OF TERROR is still available for 25c, that a subscription to any E.C. title costs 75c, and that the address for mail, T. of T. orders, subscription orders, and out-of-business publishers is:

The Vault-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 31
225 Lafayette Street
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.

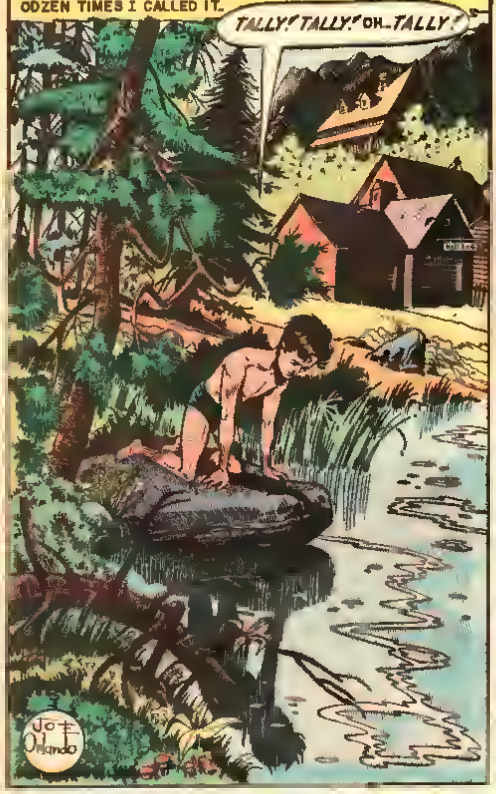
*So go to it, old man!—editors)*

Nmmmmmmmm!

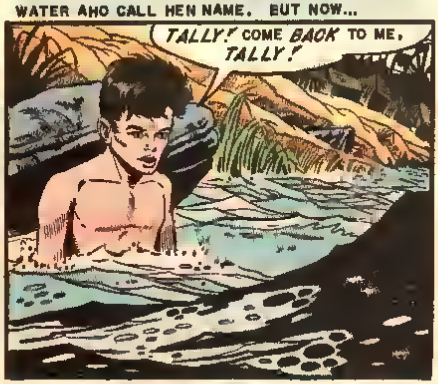
HERE IS MY ADAPTATION OF
RAY BRADBURY'S...

# The Lake

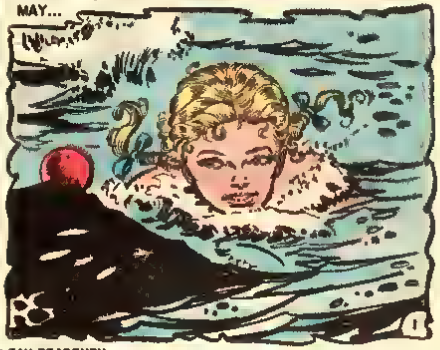
IT WAS SEPTEMBEN.. IN THE LAST DAYS WHEN THINGS ANE GETTING SAD FOR NO NEASDN. THE SEACH WAS LONG AND LONELY. ALL DF THE HOT OOG STANDS WERE BOARDED UP WITH STRIPS OF SOLDEN PLANKINS, SEALING IN THE MUSTAND, ONION, MEAT ODDNS DF TNE LONS, JDYFUL SUMMER. IT WAS LIKE NAILING SUMMEN INTO A SENIES DF COFFINS. THE WIND HAD COME ANO TOUCHED THE SAND, BLOWINS AWAY ALL OF THE MILLIDN FOOTPNINTS DF JULY AND AUGUST. I WAS ALDNE. I CALLED HEN NAME. A ODZEN TIMES I CALLED IT.




EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN SCNOOL. I WAS NOT. TOMORROW, I WDULD SE ON MY WAY WEST ON A TRAIN. I HAO COME TO THE BEACH FOR ONE LAST SNIEF MDMENT. I WENT DOWN TO THE WATER AND LET IT COOL UP TO MY STOMACN. ALWAYS SEFORE, WITH THE CNDWO, I HADN'T DANED TO LDDK, TO CDME TO THIS SPDT AND SEARCN ANDUND IN THE WATER AHO CALL HEN NAME. BUT NOW...




FUNNY, SUT YDU REALLY EXPECT ANSWENS TO YDUN CALLING WHEN YOU ANE YOUNG. YDU FEEL THAT WHATEVEN YOU MAY THINK CAN SE NEAL. AND SOMETIMES, THAT IS NDT SO WRONG. I THDUGHT DF TALLY, SWIMMING OUT INTO THE WATER... LAST MAY...



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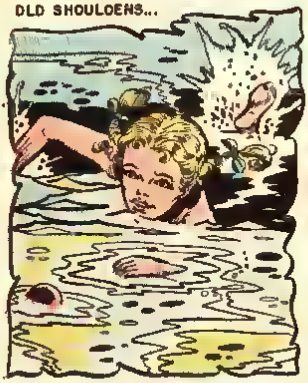
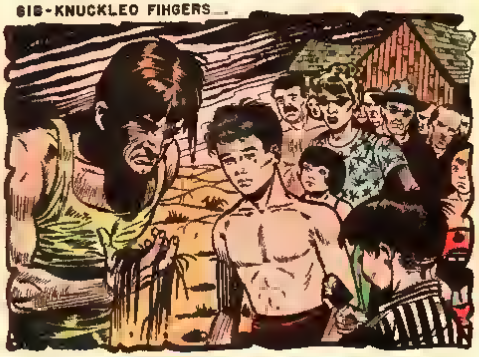
TALLY WITH HEN PIGTAILS TRAILING, BLOHOE. SHE WAS LAUGHING, AND THE SUN WAS DH HER SMALL TWELVE YEAR DLD SHOULOENS...



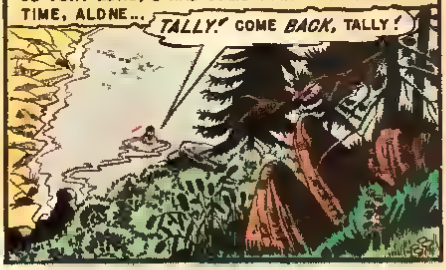
I THOUGNT OF THE WATER SETTLING DUIET..

...OF THE LIFEGUARD LEAPING INTO IT.. OF TALLY'S MOTHEN SCREAMING

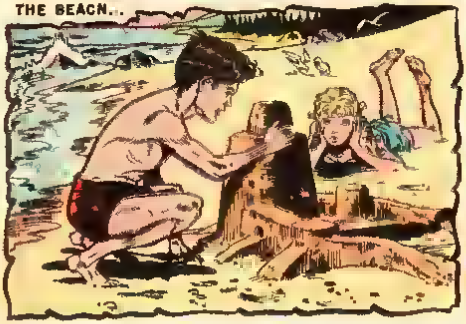
TALLY NEVER CAME OUT. THE LIFEGUARO TNIED TO PERSUADE NER TO COME DUT, BUT SHE DID NOT. HE CAME BACK WITH DNLY BITS OF WATEN-WEED IN HIS BIG-KNUCKLED FINGERS...



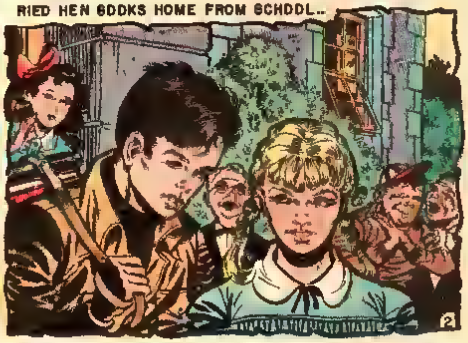
TALLY WAS GONE. SHE WDULO NOT SIT ACRDSS FROM ME AT SCHOOL AHY LONGEN, DN CHASE INDOOR BALLS DN THE BNICK STNEETS ON SUMMEN NIGHTS. SHE HAD GONE OUT TOO FAN AND THE LAKE WOULD NDT LET NEN NETURN. ANO NDW IN TNE LONELY AUTUMN WNEN THE SKY WAS HUGE AND THE WATER WAS HUGE AND THE BEACH WAS SO VERY LONG, I HAD COME DOWN FON TNE LAST TIME, ALONE...



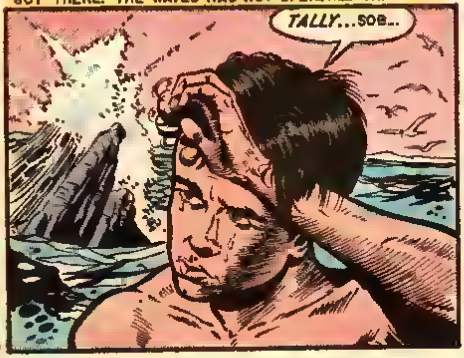

I WAS ONLY TWELVE. BUT I KNDW HOW MUCH I LOVED NEN. IT WAS TNAT LOVE THAT COMES BEFORE ALL SIGNIFICANCE OF GDOY AND MONALS. IT WAS A LDVE TNAT WAS MADE DF WARM LDNG DAYS TOGETHEN AT THE BEACN...



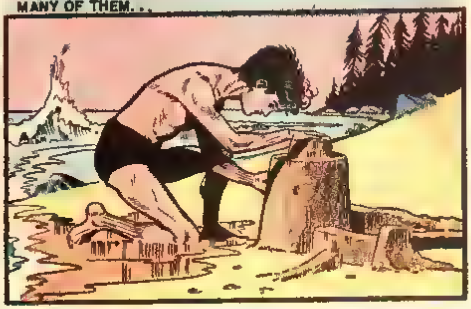
IT WAS MADE OF THE HUMMING QUIET DAYS OF DNDN-ING EDUCATION AT THE SCHDOL, ANO ALL THE LONG AUTUMN DAYS DF TNE YEARS PAST WHEN I HAD CARRIED HEN GDDKS HOME FROM SCHDDL..



I CALLED HER NAME FOR THE LAST TIME. I SHIVERED. I FELT WATER ON MY FACE AND DID NOT KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE. THE WAVES HAD NOT SPLASHED THAT HIGH..




TURNING, I RETREATED TO THE SAND AND STOOD THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR, HOPING FOR ONE GLIMPSE, ONE SIGN, ONE LITTLE BIT OF TALLY TO REMEMBER. THEN, I KNELT AND BUILT A SAND CASTLE, SHAPING IT FINE, BUILDING IT AS TALLY AND I HAD OFTEN BUILT SO MANY OF THEM...



BUT THIS TIME, I ONLY BUILT HALF A SAND CASTLE. THEN I GOT UP

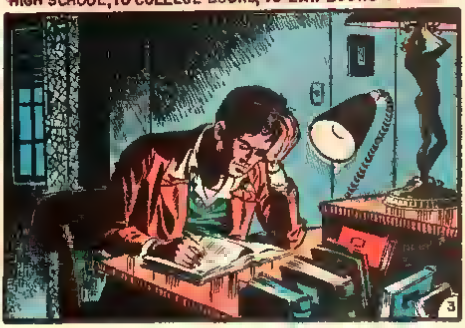
AFTER A WHILE, THE WATER CAME IN..

...BLENDING THE SAND-CASTLE, WASHING IT DOWN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, INTO THE ORIGINAL SMOOTHNESS...

SILENTLY I WALKED ALONG THE SHORE. FAR AWAY, A MERRY-GO-ROUND JANGLED FAINTLY...BUT IT WAS ONLY THE WIND.

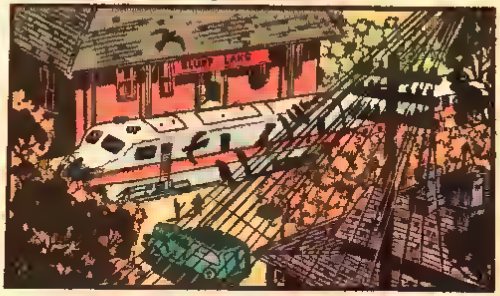
THE NEXT DAY I WENT AWAY ON THE TRAIN. A TRAIN HAS POOR MEMORY. IT SOON PUTS ALL BEHIND IT. IT FORGETS THE CORN LANDS AND RIVERS.OF CHILDHOOD, THE BRIDGES, THE LAKES, THE VALLEYS, THE COTTAGES, THE HURTS AND THE JOYS. IT SPREADS THEM OUT BEHIND AND THEY DROP BACK OF THE HORIZON...

I LENGTHENED MY BONES, PUT FLESH ON THEM, CHANGED MY YOUNG MIND FOR AN OLDER ONE, THREW AWAY CLOTHES AS THEY NO LONGER FITTED, SIFTED FROM GRAMMAR TO HIGH SCHOOL, TO COLLEGE BOOKS, TO LAW BOOKS ..



AND THEN THERE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN...MARGARET... IN SACRAMENTO. I KNEW HER FOR A TIME, AND WE WERE MARRIED...

AND WE CAME BACK...BACK TO LAKE BLUFF,.. FOR OUR HONEY-MOON. LIKE A MEMORY, A TRAIN WORKS BOTH WAYS. A TRAIN CAN BRING RUSHING BACK ALL THOSE THINGS YOU LEFT BEHIND SO MANY YEARS BEFORE...




LAKE BLUFF, POPULATION 10,000, CAME UP OVER THE SKY. MARGARET LOOKED SO HANDSOME IN HER FINE NEW CLOTHES. SHE WATCHED ME AS I FELT MY OLD WORLD GATHER ME BACK INTO ITS LIVING. SHE HELD MY ARM AS THE TRAIN SLID INTO BLUFF STATION, AND OUR BAGGAGE WAS ESCORTED OUT...

WE STAYED ON TWO WEEKS IN ALL, REVISITING ALL THE PLACES TOGETHER. THE DAYS WERE HAPPY. I THOUGHT I LOVED MARGARET WELL. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID. IT WAS ON ONE OF THE LAST DAYS THAT WE WALKED DOWN BY THE SHORE...

I HAD THAT FEELING AGAIN OF WANTING TO BE ALONE. BUT I COULD NOT FORCE MYSELF TO SPEAK OF THIS TO MARGARET...

IT WAS LATE IN THE DAY. THE BEACH WAS ALMOST DESERTED. THE LIFEGUARD BOAT PULLED UP ON THE SHORE. THE LIFEGUARD STEPPED OUT OF IT, SLOWLY, WITH SOMETHING IN HIS ARMS...

I FROZE THERE. I HELD MY BREATH AND I FELT SMALL... ONLY TWELVE YEARS OLD, VERY LITTLE, VERY INFINITESIMAL AND AFRAID...

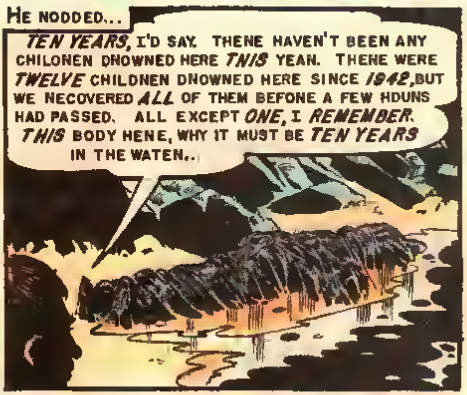
THE WIND HOWLED. I COULD NOT SEE MARGARET. I COULD SEE ONLY THE BEACH, THE LIFEGUARD SLOWLY EMERGING FROM THE BOAT WITH A GREY SACK IN HIS HANDS, NOT VERY HEAVY, AND HIS FACE ALMOST AS GREY AND LINED ..

I WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE SAND TO WHERE THE LIFEGUARD STOOD. HE LOOKED AT ME...

THE LIFEGUARD KEPT LOOKING AT ME FOR A LONG TIME AND HE COULDN'T SPEAK. HE PUT THE GREY SACK DOWN ON THE SAND, AND THE WATER WHISPERED WET UP AROUND IT AND WENT BACK..

I WAITED...

HE NODDED...




I STARED AT THE SACK. THE WIND WAS LOUD..

THEN, PENHAPS HE SAW THE WAY MY FACE MUST HAVE LOOKED. HE FUMBLED WITH THE SACK, OPENING IT ONLY PART WAY. IT WAS ENOUGH. THERE WAS ONLY THE SKY AND THE WIND AND THE WATEN AND AUTUMN COMING ON LONELY. I LOOKED DOWN AT HEN THERE..

I THOUGHT...

PEOPLE GROW. I HAVE GHOWN, BUT SHE HAS NOT CHANGED. SHE IS STILL SMALL. DEATH DOES NOT PERMIT GROWTH OR CHANGE SHE STILL HAS BOLDEN HAIR. SHE WILL BE FOREVER YOUNG AND I WILL LOVE HER FOREVEN, OH GOD, I WILL LOVE HER FOREVER.

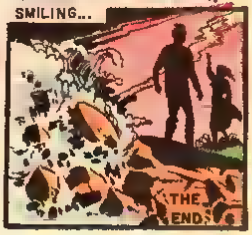
THE LIFEGUARD TIED UP THE SACK. I WALKED BY MYSELF, ODWN THE BEACH, DOWN TOWARD WHENE HE'D FOUND HEN. THERE, AT THE WATER'S EDGE, LAY A SAND CASTLE, OHLY HALF-BUILT...

JUST LIKE TALLY AND I USED TO BUILD THEM. SHE HALF... AND I HALF. I LOOKED AT IT. I KNELT BESIDE IT AND I SAW THE LITTLE PRINTS OF FEET COMING IN FROM THE LAKE AND GOING BACK OUT TO THE LAKE AGAIN AND NOT EVER RETURNING...

AND THEN, I KNEW..

I DID. I BUILT THE REST OF IT UP VERY SLOWLY, THEN AROSE...

... AND TURNED AWAY AND WALKED OFF, SO AS NOT TO WATCH IT CNUMBLE IN THE WAVES THE WAY ALL THINGS CNUMBLE. I WALKED BACK UP THE BEACH TO WHENE A STRANGE WOMAN NAMED MARGARET WAITED FOR ME, SMILING...



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! AND NOW IT'S *WIND-UP* TIME IN *V.K.'S MAG*, AND SO AS NOT TO DISAPPOINT ANY OF YOU *HUNGRY GHOULS* WHO *STILL* HAVEN'T *SATISFIED* YOUR *APPETITE* FOR *HORROR*, YOUR *HOSTESS IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH*, WILL NOW *SLING SLIME*. THIS *DISGUSTING DELVING INTO DELIRIUM* IS A *FAVORITE CAULDRON CONCOCTION* OF MINE, GUARANTEED TO *KILL* ANY *CRAVING* YOU MIGHT HAVE. I *CALL* THIS *PUTRID PORTION* OF *PROSE*...

## ONE GOOD TURN...

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAD BEEN WONDERFUL MONTHS FOR JENNIFER. THINGS HAD CHANGED. EAGERLY SHE WOULD RUSH HOME EACH NIGHT TO TELL EDWIN, HER HUSBAND, OF HER LATEST EXPLOIT. AND EDWIN WOULD LIE THERE, LISTENING TO JENNIFER, WHILE SHE DESCRIBED HER RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENT. POOR DEAR EDWIN. BED-RIDDEN EDWIN. PARALYZED FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS. YES, THINGS HAD CHANGED FOR EDWIN AND JENNIFER. THINGS WERE *DIFFERENT* NOW...

IT'S *JENNIFER*, EDWIN, DEAR! I'M *HOME!*

JENNIFER STOOD IN THE HALL, SHIVERING FROM THE BLEAK WINTER COLD THAT GRIPPED THE OUTSIDE WORLD IN ITS ICY FIST. CAREFULLY, SHE REMOVED HER THREAD-BARE COAT AND HUNG IT IN THE CLOSET...

OH, I'VE HAD SUCH A *WONDERFUL* DAY, EDWIN, DEAR. WAIT TILL I *TELL* YOU!

GHASTLY

JENNIFER TODOLED DOWN THE HALL TO THE BEDROOM DOOR. SHE OPENED IT A CNACK AND PEERED IN. EDWIN LAY, SILENT, IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE DOUBLE BED...

JUST LET ME FIX MYSELF SOME *TEA*, MY DARLING. THEN I'LL COME TO BED AND TELL YOU ALL *ABOUT* IT.

THE TEAPOT STOOD IN ITS USUAL PLACE ON THE OLD STOVE. JENNIFER LIT THE GAS AND PUT OUT A CUP AND SAUCER, HUMMING SOFTLY. SHE RAISED HER VOICE SO EDWIN COULD HEAR HER...

MAKING PEOPLE *HAPPY* CAN GIVE ONE SUCH A FEELING OF *ACCOMPLISHMENT* AND *SATISFACTION*, EDWIN.

SHE SAT DEMURELY AT THE SPOTLESS TABLE, SIPPING THE WARM BREW...

OH, EDWIN. I'M SO *GLAD* I FOUND THAT PEOPLE *NEED* ME. IT'S SO *NICE* TO KNOW YOU'RE *NEEDED*. IT'S SO *NICE* TO KNOW YOU CAN *DO THINGS* FOR PEOPLE.

JENNY DRAINED THE TEACUP DRY AND WASHED IT IN THE SINK AND PUT IT AWAY. THEN SHE REFILLED THE POT AND PUT IT BACK ON THE STOVE..

I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A *MINUTE*, DARLING. SOON AS I *WASH UP* AND GET INTO MY *GOWN*...

THE WATER SPLASHED LOUDLY IN THE SINK. JENNY SANG SOFTLY AS SHE WASHED AND WIPED AND COMBED AND CREAMED AND DID ALL THE THINGS THAT WOMEN DO IN PREPARATION FOR BED...

*THERE. NOW* I'M READY. I WASN'T *TOO* LONG, *WAS* I, EDWIN? I *HURRIED* AS FAST AS I *COULD*. DEAR EDWIN. IS IT *AWFUL* BEING LEFT ALONE ALL DAY?

SHE WAS BESIDE HIM NOW, BETWEEN COOL SHEETS, SNUGGLING UP TO HIM, STROKING HIS HAIR, KISSING HIM...

IT WAS SO *WONDERFUL* TODAY, EDWIN. I *MET* HIM NEAR THE *RIVER*. HE LIVED IN AN *OLD SHACK*. YOU SHOULD HAVE *SEEN* HIM, EDWIN! HE WAS *SO UNHAPPY*. HE *TOLD* ME *ALL ABOUT IT*...

'HIS NAME WAS *BENTRUM*. I *CALLED* HIM *BERT*. HE TOLD ME HOW, ONCE UPON A TIME, HE'D BEEN *RICH*...*VERY RICH*...'

BUT THEN I *LOST* IT ALL, JENNY! THE *CRASH*, YOU KNOW. AND I LOST MY *FRIENDS, TOO*. AND MY *WIFE*. AND I WAS *TOO OLD* TO START ALL *OVER* AGAIN...

*POOR* BERT. YOU MUST BE *VERY UNHAPPY!*

OH, I WAS, JENNY! I WAS VERY UNHAPPY!
I'D LIKE TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN, BERT.
OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT, JENNY! IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. I'VE GOTTEN OVER IT AND... JENNY! WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT KNIFE...?
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN, BERT!
NO! NO, JENNY! MY GOD! I AM HAPPY, NOW! I'VE GOTTEN USED TO THIS! I... I... JENNY! KEEP AWAY...
IT'LL BE SO NICE, BERT, TOU WON'T BE SAD AHTMORE.
JENNY SIGHED AND SMILED. HER ETES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE STROKED EDWIN'S CHEEK...
SO I STABBED NIM, MT DARLING! OH, EDWIN! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIS FACE. SO CALM. SO SERENE. HE LAT THERE ON THE FLOOR WITH THAT KHIFE IN HIS CHEST...SMILING!
'I MADE SOMEONE HAPPY TODAY, EDWIN. ARE YOU PROUD OF ME? REMEMBER GRACE? GRACE WAS HER NAME, WASN'T IT? SHE WAS CRYING WHEN I MET HER. I TOLD YOU ABOUT GRACE, EDWIN. REMEMBER?...'
SOMETHING WRONG, MY DEAR? CAN I HELP YOU?
SOB...SOB... LEAVE ME ALONE! PLEASE! GO AWAY!
COME, MT DEAR. LET'S TAKE A WALK! TOU'LL TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!
REALLY...SOB. ALL I WANT IS TO BE LEFT ALONE...SOB...
AND THAT'S THE STORY, JENNY! HE WALKED OUT ON ME. LEFT ME FLAT, WITHOUT A DIME. AND I TRUSTED HIM... BELIEVED IN HIM.
YOU POOR, DEAR GIRL.' HE'S MADE YOU SO WRETCHED. I WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU.
3

WHAT CAN YOU DO, JENNY? IT'S MY PROBLEM. I'LL JUST HAVE TO GET OVER... JENNY! MY GOD!
THIS IS WHAT I CAN DO, GRACE... I CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...
'THE ROCK LYING ON THE DESERTED PATH IN THE PARK MADE EVERYTHING SO EASY. I BROUGHT IT DOWN ON GRACE'S SKULL AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL SHE SMILED AS THE BLOOD GURGLED FROM HER LIPS...'
NOW... GRACE... NOW YOU'RE HAPPY!
'AND SIDNEY, POOR SIDNEY, REMEMBER ME TELLING YOU ABOUT SIDNEY, EDWIN? POOR BOY, HE WAS SEVEN AT THE MOST. CRYING HIS EYES OUT. POOR LITTLE TYKE...'
WHAT IS IT, CHILD? ARE YOU LOST? WHAT'S THE MATTER, LITTLE ONE?
I...SOB... I RAN AWAY FROM HOME... AN' NOW... SOB... NOW I'M LAWST...
'HE WAS SO UNHAPPY, EDWIN. SO SAD. AND SO EAGER FOR COMFORT. WHEN I TOOK HIM INTO THE ALLEY, HE STOPPED CRYING...'
WHERE ARE WE GOING, AUNT JENNY?
TRUST ME, SIDNEY. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...
'HE LOOKED SO SWEET AS I CLOSED MY FINGERS AROUND HIS SMALL WHITE THROAT, EDWIN. SO AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD AS HE SLIPPED FROM MY GRASP AND FELL TO THE ALLEY PAVEMENT, DEAD...'
THERE, MY CHILD, THERE. NOW YOU WON'T EVER CRY AGAIN!'
'THESE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAVE BEEN SO WONDERFUL FOR ME, EDWIN. SO WONDERFUL MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY... RESCUING THEM FROM THEIR MISERY AND DESPAIR...'
BUY A PENCIL. BUY A PENCIL. HELP A BLIND MAN. BUY A PENCIL.
OH, DEAR...
'CAN ANYONE BE MORE WRETCHED... MORE SAD THAN A BLIND MAN, EDWIN? I HAD TO HELP HIM. I HAD TO...'
ALL OF THEM? OR, BLESS YOU, LADY! BLESS YOU!
NOW YOU CAN STOP FOR THE DAY, YOU POOR DEAR. COME. GIVE ME YOUR HAND...
4

'ONE MINUTE, SADNESS AND MISERY. THE NEXT MINUTE, PEACE AND CONTENTMENT. SO EASY TO LEAD HIM TO THE STREET. TO GUIDE HIM OFF THE CURB...INTO THE PATH OF THE TRUCK...'

I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

TH-THANK YOU, LADY! YOU'RE SO...KIND...

'THE SQUEALING BRAKES. LIKE PEALS OF LAUGHTER THE ONLY THING I REGRET WAS NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE HIM HAPPY AT LAST.. HAVING TO LEAVE THE SCENE...'

ANOTHER SOUL, LIFTED FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR TO THE GLORIOUS JOY OF DEATH...

GOOD LORD!

WHAT HAPPENED?

'HOW CAN PEOPLE GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT A MISSION, EDWIN? I USED TO THINK MY MISSION WAS CARING FOR YOU.. MAKING YOU COMFORTABLE AFTER YOU BECAME PARALYZED..'

OH, *EDWIN!* YOU'RE IN *PAIN!* I CAN *TELL!* YOUR *EYES*...

'BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I FOUND MY *REAL* PURPOSE IN LIFE. THAT WAS BEFORE THE OLD WOMAN ON THE PIER...'

I *SIT HERE, DAY* AFTER *DAY*, AND I *WAIT*. I *KNOW* HE'LL NEVER COME *HOME* TO ME BUT I *WAIT ANYWAY*...

YOU POOR THING...

'REMEMBER *HER*, EDWIN? SHE WORE A GOLD STAR. SHE WAS SO SAD..'

HE WAS A *WONDERFUL* BOY, JENNY. A *GOOD* BOY... WITH HIS *WHOLE LIFE* AHEAD OF HIM. HE...

DON'T BE UNHAPPY, THELMA. I HATE TO SEE PEOPLE *UNHAPPY*..

'HOW SHE FLOUNDERED IN THE WATER. HOW SHE SCREAMED. AND HOW SERENE AND CONTENT SHE LOOKED AS SHE WENT DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, THE MURKY RIVER POURING INTO HER LUNGS THROUGH HER SMILING LIPS...'

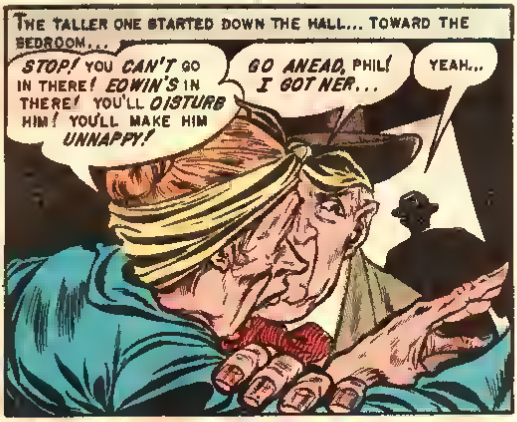
'FOUR MONTHS IT'S BEEN, EDWIN. FOUR MONTHS SINCE I DISCOVERED MY MISSION IN LIFE. REMEMBER THE DAY? IT WAS SUNDAY. YOU LAY IN YOUR BED, STARING OUT AT THE SNOW FALLING ON THE BARE DEAD TREE OUTSIDE OUR BEDROOM WINDOW...'

WHAT *IS* IT, EDWIN? YOU LOOK SO *SAD* TODAY. WHY... YOU'RE *CRYING*...

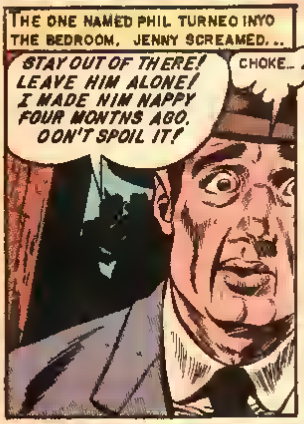
'I COULO SEE THE TEARS FILLING YOUR STARING EYES. I COULD SEE ALL THE SADNESS AND DESPAIN OVENFLOWING YOUN EYELIOS AND TRICKLING DOWN YOUR CHEEKS...'
DON'T CRY, EDWIN! DON'T BE SAD. I CAN'T STAND TO BEE YOU UNHAPPY.
I KNOW WHAT, EDWIN. I KNOW WHAT! I'LL MAKE YOU YOUR FAVORITE DRINK. I'LL MAKE YOU A HOT CHOCOLATE. WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE...?
'AND SUDDENLY, ON THAT DAY FOUR MONTHS AGO, I KNEW I KNEW HOW TO MAKE YOU HAPPY. SO I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND I MADE YOU YOUR FAVONITE. HOT CHOCOLATE...'.
I'LL BE FINISHED SOON, EDWIN.
JENNY LAY BESIDE EDWIN IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. SHE WHISPENED SOFTLY, BTROKING HIB CHEEK...
AND WHEN I'D FINISHED MAKING YOUR ORINK, I PUT THE.. THE...OH, DEAR! WHO CAN THAT BE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?
OPEN UP IN THERE!
THE HEAVY POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSE. JENNY KISSED EDWIN AND SLID OUT OF BED...
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, EDWIN. I'LL SEE WHO IT IS AND BE RIGHT BACK...
THERE WENE TWO OF THEM...BOMBER-FACED MEN PEERING OUT OF THE DARKNESS AT HER...
MIND IF WE CAME IN, MA'AM?
WE'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU
JENNY LOOKED AT THE SHINY BADGE THAT ONE OF THEM HELD OUT TO HER. SHE GLANCED OVER HER SHOULDER DOWN THE HALL...
WELL... ALL RIGHT. YOU CAN COME IN FOR A MINUTE, BUT PLEASE... KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN. MY HUSBAND'S IN THE BEDROOM...
WE JUST WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.
5

JENNY CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND THEM. THEY LOOKED AROUND ONE OF THEM GRIMACED . . .

THE TALLER ONE STARTED DOWN THE HALL... TOWARD THE BEDROOM...




THE ONE NAMED PHIL TURNED INTO THE BEDROOM, JENNY SCREAMED...




PHIL CAME OUT AGAIN, HIS HAND CLAMPED TO HIS MOUTH, JENNY BEGAN TO SOB . . .

THE ONE NAMED STEVE PUSHED JENNY TO THE BEDROOM. HE STARED IN. JENNY GRINNED...

EDWIN LAY ON THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. THE FLESH OF HIS FACE WAS BEGINNING TO FALL AWAY REVEALING WHITENED GRINNING TEETH. WHAT THE DETECTIVES HAD NOTICED WAS THE FOUL ODOR OF DECAY THAT SPRUNG FROM HIS LONG-DEAD BODY...

HEE, HEE! THAT'S IT, CREEPS. THAT'S MY FOUL FARE FOR THIS ISSUE. THEY TOOK POOR JENNY AWAY AND PUT HER IN A PADDED CELL WHERE SHE CAN'T MAKE ANYBODY HAPPY ANYMORE. BUT SHE TRIES. THE KEEPERS HAVE A DEVIL OF A TIME WITH HER. AND NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT OUT THE FIRE BENEATH MY CAULDRON AND CLOSE THE VAULT-KEEPER'S MAG FOR THIS ISSUE. WE'LL ALL BEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, THE HAUNT OF FEAR. 'BYE, NOW!

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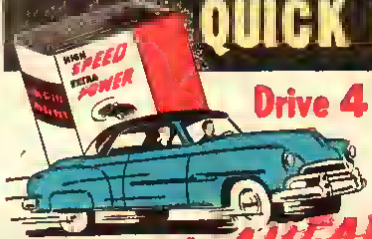


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